

SCIENCE BUDGET:

ALLOCATIONS 1988-89

PLANNING FIGURES

1989-90-1990-91

Advice to the

**SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR EDUCATION & SCIENCE**

from the

**ADVISORY BOARD FOR
THE RESEARCH COUNCILS**

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ADV

Rt hon Kenneth Baker MP
Secretary of State for
Education and Science
Elizabeth House
York Road
LONDON
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Your reference

Our reference

11 December 1987

Dear Secretary of State,

SCIENCE BUDGET ALLOCATIONS 1988-91

I enclose the ABRC's advice on the allocation of the Science Budget for 1988-89 to 1990-91 and commend to you the Board's recommendations.

The Board welcomed the increases in the Science Budget which you announced on 3 November, but was profoundly disappointed that these are insufficient either to avert a reduction in the volume of scientific activity or to allow for the necessary strategic reshaping of the science base. The allocations which we recommend provide for a few new initiatives - notably a small start on the establishment of university research centres - but these will only be possible through further reductions in Councils' existing scientific programmes. The scope for such trimming is now effectively exhausted. Releasing funds for initiatives in future years will require withdrawal from major areas of science. We drew attention to this possibility in our advice on strategy and on public expenditure earlier this year, as part of our reasoned case for an increase in the Science Budget to meet the nation's needs. The Board awaits a substantive response from the Government.

There are three particular points about our recommended allocations to which I should draw your attention:

- we have assumed that if the Government decides that the UK should remain in membership of CERN beyond 1988, it will provide the necessary additional resources;
- we recommend that £3 million be allocated to NERC for a restructuring programme involving targetted redundancies. This is necessitated by a reduction in the Council's commissions from Government Departments and we advise that you should seek appropriate reimbursement for the Science Budget from other Exchequer funds;
- we recommend allocations for the relocation of the AFRC and ESRC headquarters offices, the lease for which is being unexpectedly terminated in 1988. Detailed planning for this is still at an early stage, and some virement between the sums we recommend for this purpose may be necessary during the course of the year.

The Board and I would be pleased to discuss with you any points arising from this advice. We trust that, as on previous occasions, you will agree to its publication.

Yours sincerely

David Phillips

DAVID PHILLIPS

ABRC ADVICE ON ALLOCATION OF THE SCIENCE BUDGET 1988-91

Introduction

1. The Secretary of State announced on 3 November 1987 that the Science Budget for 1988-89 would be £696 million and that the planning figure for each of the following two years would be £729 million. This represented increases of £47 million, £65 million and £48 million on the Government's previous expenditure plans for these three years. The Secretary of State indicated that the totals he announced included specified additions for research in Antarctica and the MRC's programmes of AIDS research.

2. This paper presents the Board's response to this announcement and our advice on the allocation of the new Science Budget totals among the Research Councils and other funded bodies. Firm decisions are required on the allocation for 1988-89; while for later years the Councils and other bodies need a provisional indication of their likely allocations for planning purposes.

Expenditure Trends

3. Relative to the Government's forecasts of inflation in the economy as a whole - the GDP deflator - the revised expenditure plans for the Science Budget imply increases of 1.3% in 1988-89 and a further 1.2% in 1989-90, followed by a reduction of 3% in 1990-91. However, if the earmarked additions for Antarctic and AIDS research are set to one side, the trend in Science Budget expenditure is for a **slight decline**: of about 0.2% in each of 1988-89 and 1989-90, with no change in 1990-91.

4. However, cost increases affecting the Science Budget have for some years exceeded the GDP deflator. In part, these are difficult to quantify - for instance, as regards the rising costs of increasingly sophisticated equipment. But some increases in costs, such as for pay and international subscriptions, can be (and have been) readily identified. A major factor in the current year has been the increase in costs resulting from the substantial pay awards for university academic staff and scientific civil servants sanctioned by the Government. The £15 million addition to the Science Budget in 1987-88 announced by the Secretary of State on 1 April averted some, but not all, of the loss of high quality science which would otherwise have arisen. We estimate that, taking account of their higher costs in later years (because of

their phasing and restructuring elements), the 1987 pay awards will result in a 2% reduction in the scientific activity which the Research Councils could otherwise fund in 1988-89. Without any allowance for further cost increases above average inflation, the amount of research which the Science Budget buys will thus be between 2% and 3% lower in 1990-91 than was planned for this year.

5. That reduction compares starkly with the cumulative 8% growth in the UK's national wealth (GDP) which the Government is forecasting over the same period. Basic and strategic scientific research will thereby become an even smaller part of our national effort. The UK already spends a smaller proportion of GDP on publicly funded civil research than other major European countries. Those countries have declared plans to increase such spending, in marked contrast to the reduction for which the UK Government is in effect planning.

Board's Reaction

6. The Board's reaction to this outcome is acute disappointment at the lost opportunity for science and for the nation. In our advice for this year's public expenditure survey, we concluded that the UK science base was at a watershed, that for industrial and other reasons the nation needs a greater investment in science, and that the alternative of declining activity in an increasingly technological world would seriously prejudice the country's future economic and social development. The Government has chosen the latter course. We believe it is badly mistaken.

7. In particular, we note with very great regret that the Government has not provided the significant sums necessary for the strategic reshaping of the science base. Greater concentration and selectivity of research funding, and a further shift to areas of strategic science with potential for exploitation, are essential if the UK is to remain in the forefront of even some areas of science, if the country's technological development is to be sustained, and for the achievement of the Government's declared policy to maintain and enhance the strength and quality of the science base. In part, these objectives can be pursued through redeployment of existing resources. But the scope for this and the pace at which change can be facilitated are limited. More is needed, faster. That requires extra spending to cover transitional costs and, we believe, an increase in the expenditure baseline to sustain a greater volume of strategic science. The Government's expenditure plans for the Science Budget do not provide for this. Nor do the revised spending plans for the rest of the science base tell a significantly different story.

ALLOCATION OF THE SCIENCE BUDGET

8. It is against the above dismal background that the Board has considered allocation of the Science Budget totals among the Research Councils and other funded bodies. We have striven to direct monies in accord with the principles set out in "A Strategy for the Science Base", but to too large an extent we have been constrained to apply funds to cover a variety of immediate pressing needs. Our recommendations for additions to previously agreed planning allocations are described in the following paragraphs and are summarised in Annex A. The first group - paragraphs 9-19 - concern various committed and inescapable expenditures; together they absorb nearly all the funds available.

1987-88 Pay Awards

9. As already mentioned, the substantial pay settlements agreed by the Government for university academic staff and the scientific civil service have had a major impact on Councils' budgets in 1987-88. We estimate that the total cost of this year's pay awards will amount to some £30 million* in 1988-89, and £31 million* in later years, in excess of the provision for pay increases within previous expenditure plans. The Board shares the Government's view that publicly-funded bodies should not expect to be automatically compensated in full for the cost of pay increases. Nonetheless, in the case of the Research Councils, we note that they are not party to the pay negotiations concerned but are contractually bound to accept the outcome (which of necessity is endorsed by Government), and that they have already substantially reduced their manpower in recent years.

10. We therefore recommend that Science Budget bodies' allocations be increased by the amount of extra costs (ie above baseline provision) which they will incur as a result of the 1987-88 pay awards. Linked to this, however, we are proposing to the Research Councils that they institute rigorous reviews of their own manpower, both scientific and administrative, and of the numbers of research assistants which they support within higher education. We intend to appraise the outcomes of these reviews when we next come to consider allocation of the Science Budget.

*These sums are a little higher than the estimates in the Board's PES Advice - mainly because of more recently promulgated details of the settlement for scientific civil servants.

CERN

11. Sir David Phillips' letter of 24 September detailed the Board's views about the UK's continued membership of CERN. We understand that the Government has yet to reach conclusions on this matter. For present purposes we have therefore assumed that if the Government decides that the UK should remain a member of CERN, it will provide the necessary additional resources to enable SERC to pay both the required subscription and any contribution to restructuring costs arising from the Abragam review.

Other International Subscriptions

12. In its advice on allocation of the Science Budget last year, the Board deferred recommendations on meeting the increased costs of international subscriptions, in 1989-90, arising from depreciation of sterling. Since then the £ has appreciated marginally and its exchange rate against major European currencies has become relatively stable. Nevertheless, provision for subscriptions to ESA, ILL, EMBL and other smaller bodies needs supplementation to cover the extra cost of the previous exchange rate changes. The sums involved total £6.5 million in 1989-90 and £4.7 million in 1990-91. We recommend that the allocations to SERC and MRC be increased accordingly.

Commissioned Research

13. The Board has commented previously on the adverse impact on Science Budget funded activity which results from significant reductions, at relatively short notice, by Government Departments in the research they commission from Councils. We understand that as part of its present revisions to expenditure plans the Government has reduced the Agricultural Departments' R&D budget by £5 million in 1989-90 and £10 million in 1990-91, that it is intended that these funds should be made good by increased industrial funding, and thus that the more basic research commissioned from AFRC should not be significantly reduced. However, MAFF and the other Departments concerned are currently reviewing the implications in detail and the consequences for AFRC remain uncertain. We intend to keep the situation under close scrutiny.

14. Of more immediate concern, is the significant fall in commissioned income already experienced by NERC. This results mainly from reductions in DEn commissions

for offshore geological work and the end of the research programme in radioactive waste disposal funded by DOE. NERC has been very successful in increasing its income from private sources in recent years but further expected growth in that income will be insufficient to offset the major reduction in Government commissions. In consequence and with regret, the Board has concluded that the NERC must reduce its research capacity in line with the changed circumstances. Accordingly, we recommend that the Council receives an additional allocation of £3 million in 1988-89 to cover essential restructuring costs including targetted redundancies. This is a significant part of the very limited resources available for redeployment in that year, and a further £2 million may be required in 1989-90. This will not buy science. We strongly recommend that the Secretary of State seeks reimbursement for the Science Budget either from the Treasury or from those Departments whose actions have given rise to this expenditure.

AIDS

15. The special provision made by the Government for research on AIDS amounts to £6 million in 1988-89 and £8 million in 1989-90, following the £3.5 million made available in the current year. This covers the costs both of the MRC's directed programme of research aimed at developing a vaccine and new anti-viral agents and of the Council's coordinated programme covering other aspects of research on AIDS. The Secretary of State has stated that funding for the continuation of this research in 1990-91 and later years will be considered in the light of the agreed evaluation of the programmes and will be provided as an addition to the Science Budget. Additionally, however, the MRC wishes to increase its coordinated programme of research: it is seeking funds from DHSS for epidemiological studies of HIV prevalence and transmission and from ODA for a study of AIDS in Africa; and has approached ABRC for an increased allocation for clinical and pathological studies. The Board recognises that research in this field is a high priority, both scientifically and in the national interest, but has concluded with regret that the funds available for the Science Budget in 1989-90 are insufficient for a further allocation to MRC.

Antarctica

16. The additional sums "earmarked" by the Government for research in Antarctica will enable NERC to purchase a new research and supply vessel to replace the ageing RRS John Biscoe at a total cost of about £24 million; and will supplement the British Antarctic Survey's budget by around £3.4 million a year to support atmospheric research

from a new base at Halley (including further studies of the ozone hole), and programmes of global relevance on the continent's animal and mineral resources and on ice and climate.

Councils' HQs

17. The Research Councils' lease on their Great Portland Street premises is unexpectedly being terminated from September 1988. This will cause significant additional expenditure in 1988-89 for AFRC and ESRC who will be required to relocate their headquarters. Both Councils are currently undertaking a detailed study of the options for relocation; their preferred solutions, and the costs thereof, are not yet known. In the Board's view this is an opportunity - unlikely to be repeated in the foreseeable future - to locate four of the Councils' headquarters together, by moving AFRC and ESRC to a site adjoining the present NERC/SERC premises in Swindon. This option would require greater capital expenditure than most alternatives but, on the basis of the information presently available, the Board considers that this would be justified by potential savings from the sharing of common services (which should be vigorously pursued) and, more importantly, by the increased opportunity for constructive interaction between the Councils particularly in areas where their responsibilities abut and overlap. Accordingly, the Board recommends additional allocations for this purpose totalling £3 million in 1988-89, £4 million in 1989-90 and £1 million in 1990-91, though there will necessarily have to be some flexibility about the precise amounts and their incidence whilst detailed planning continues.

CEST, CCMST and the Cray

18. The final group of "committed" expenditures are small. On the recommendation of the Board, the Secretary of State has agreed to provide £80,000 a year for five years as a contribution towards the costs of the Centre for Exploitation of Science and Technology which is being established in Manchester as a result of the ACARD initiative. The Board has welcomed the Government's decision to establish the Coordinating Committee on Marine Science and Technology; £60,000 a year is needed for its administrative costs in addition to the secretariat support being provided by NERC. And, following the Board's purchase last year of the Cray XMP 48 super-computer, about £1.2 million a year is required to support the enhanced computer services now available to all Councils from SERC's Atlas laboratory.

Strategic Reshaping

19. We have already commented on how little money the Government has made available for new developments and particularly for the strategic reshaping of the science base which is necessary in the national interest. After allocating the inescapable amounts recommended in the previous paragraphs, only £7.5 million is available for distribution in 1988-89 to support new initiatives.

University Research Centres

20. Our main priority for the allocation of these limited funds is to make a start on the establishment of interdisciplinary research centres at higher education institutions (commonly referred to as university research centres). As we described in "A Strategy for the Science Base" and in our PES advice, the Board sees such centres as a particularly effective means of facilitating:

- i. greater concentration of research effort, based on existing strengths;
- ii. more interdisciplinary working, with the deployment of scientists from a range of disciplines outside the confines of traditional departments;
- iii. increased effort in important areas of strategic science;
- iv. more positive management of research within higher education;
- v. more effective collaboration between higher education institutions and the Research Councils in the deployment of research resources;
- vi. a readier interface between strategic science and industry.

We intend that such centres should be important developments in their own right and - if eventually they can be established in sufficient numbers - that they will also have a significant impact on the higher education research enterprise as a whole.

21. The selection of appropriate fields for new research centres will be important. The Board's view is that the most pressing need is in the physical sciences and engineering, and it will be engaged with the SERC in selecting initial priorities. It will also

be involved with the other Research Councils in identifying possible topics in their areas of responsibility, and with them and SERC in considering research centre proposals which bridge Councils' responsibilities. Equally important will be the role of higher education institutions themselves, individually and collectively, in initiating and developing proposals for research centres. If the objectives sketched above are to be achieved, it will also be vital for industry to be involved in the selection of appropriate fields for the establishment of research centres. ACOST and the new Centre for Exploitation of Science and Technology will have an important contribution to make in this regard.

22. We note the encouragement for this initiative included in the Secretary of State's Parliamentary announcement of the revised expenditure plans, and we recommend that a start be made in 1988-89, capitalising in particular on the preparatory work undertaken by SERC. That work has resulted in receipt of 81 bids from higher education institutions for a research centre in one of the 8 priority fields suggested by SERC plus a further 55 proposals in alternative fields. We welcome the SERC's decision to fund a centre researching higher temperature superconductivity and one other from within its existing planning allocation, and we recommend that SERC be given additional allocations of £2.8 million in 1988-89, £5m in 1989-90 and £3 million in 1990-91 to fund a further two research centres. There is a possibility that one of these might encompass AFRC interests in food process engineering. Additionally, the Board recommends allocation of £0.3 million rising to £4.2 million to MRC for the establishment of the university research centre in toxicology which it has proposed.

23. Organising and managing continuing programmes of research with clear objectives, whilst sustaining the traditional university research strengths of flexibility and the capacity for innovation, will not be easy. The funding and management arrangements for research centres will need to be carefully structured so as to generate productive interchange within the host institution(s) whilst having a clear identity and mission of their own. The detailed arrangements will necessarily vary in relation to the fields and locations of each centre, but key elements will need to be common. The Board will be working with the Research Councils and the UGC in coming months to determine this essential framework, taking account of proposals originating from the institutions themselves.

Research Council Restructuring

24. In parallel with the necessary reshaping of university research, the Board is convinced of the need to make further progress with the restructuring of the Research Councils' own establishments. A great deal has been achieved by the Councils in recent years in strengthening central management, bringing related work together, promoting greater effectiveness and reordering research priorities. In particular the upheavals faced by the AFRC and NERC, which together are shedding about a third of their manpower, have few parallels in the public sector.

25. The funds available for this purpose in 1988-89 are extremely limited. Of the various proposals under consideration we recommend that additional resources be allocated to NERC to support the move of the British Geological Survey's badly overcrowded geochemical laboratories from inner London to the main BGS site at Keyworth in Nottinghamshire. This is a particularly cost-effective scheme with clear prospects of a scientific pay-off. We have, however, asked NERC to rephrase the scheme so that more of the expenditure falls in 1989-90 and the additional allocations we recommend reflect that.

26. Much larger schemes for Research Councils' restructuring are on the horizon including, for instance, the MRC's Clinical Research Centre, AFRC's Institute of Food Research, and NERC's Institute of Oceanographic Sciences. The Board intends to examine these proposals in detail and will put considered advice to the Secretary of State next year.

27. As recorded in our advice in previous years, we have also been promoting a shift in the balance of some Councils' expenditure in order that they support more research in universities. To further this end we recommend that AFRC be allocated an additional £1.5 million in 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Other Allocations

28. The Board also wishes to recommend additional allocations for the following purposes:

- a. LINK The Board welcomed the Government's initiative in establishing LINK and hopes to see the scheme operational very shortly. Amongst the Councils,

SERC has so far been the most active in the joint sponsorship of LINK programme proposals. Most of the funds for this have been redeployed within SERC's existing budgets. Given the importance which the Board attaches to stimulating more strategic research in collaboration with industry, we recommend that SERC be allocated a further £1.1 million in 1988-89 and £2 million in later years to support further LINK programmes.

- b. ESRF The proposed European Synchrotron Radiation Facility will yield an experimental tool of great importance to a wide range of research scientists; it will be 10^5 times more powerful than SERC's existing facility at Daresbury. It is also an example of the sort of international collaborative venture which needs encouraging. We recommend that the UK becomes a member. But in view of the limited resources currently available we consider that part of the subscription should be covered by savings on SERC's central facilities and our recommended additional allocations for ESRF (£1 million rising to £2.5 million) reflect this.
- c. Teaching Company Scheme This scheme continues to receive plaudits from both industry and the research community. It is particularly valuable for small and medium-sized companies. We recommend additional allocations for SERC to enable expansion from the present 260 programmes to about 330 by 1992. DTI fully supports this expansion and is prepared to make available the necessary matching funds.
- d. Transgenic Animals The AFRC is keen to develop its research on transgenic animals. The Board recognises this as a field of enormous future potential. It therefore recommends additional allocations of £0.5 million in 1988-89 and £1.5 million in later years to complement funds being redeployed within AFRC.
- e. University Research Fellowships The Board has been greatly encouraged by the continuing success of this Royal Society scheme providing support for talented young scientists. We recommend additional allocations to allow the appointment of a further 25 fellows.
- f. European Academy The Board has welcomed the discussions currently in progress between representatives of several countries aimed at establishing

a European Academy of Scientists with a membership of eminent scholars and a focus on developing greater cohesion in European science. The Royal Society has offered to secure premises for the Academy, and we recommend that it be allocated £35,000 in 1988-89 and £50,000 in later years for this purpose. The running costs of the Academy are to be met from charitable and industrial sources.

Flexibility Margin

29. Finally, the Board has given careful consideration to the future need for its Flexibility Margin. Our experience this year convinces us more than ever of the importance of keeping a small reserve to facilitate worthwhile developments, however limited, even when the overall prospects for the Science Budget are grim. We therefore recommend retention of a Flexibility Margin equivalent to about 2% of the total Budget in 1989-90 and 4% in 1990-91. We intend to review further our own arrangements for considering the allocation of this Margin, particularly its relationship with the annual PES cycle.

30. A small element of flexibility may also emerge in the allocations for 1988-89, depending on the precise costs incurred in the relocation of Councils' HQs and the Secretary of State's success in securing other funds to offset NERC's restructuring costs. If resources do become available in this way, the Board's priorities would be: to make a start on the planned collaborative programmes between Research Councils on agriculture and the environment and the IT/human interface; and for an increase in MRC's AIDS research. The costs of these programmes in later years would then be a first call on the Board's Flexibility Margin. One-off additions to allocations in 1988-89 could be used to help MRC with the costs of establishing its Institute of Molecular Medicine, or to bring forward work on NERC's Keyworth II relocation and AFRC's transgenic animals programme.

Conclusions

31. In our expenditure advice to the Secretary of State in June, we stated that the UK science base was at a watershed. The Government's revised expenditure plans for the Science Budget do not provide the means to move our nation's scientific capability towards the twenty-first century. We remain precariously poised at the divide and are beginning to slip in the wrong direction. A great opportunity has

sadly been missed. The Board has already registered its acute disappointment to the Secretary of State in person and we reiterate that here.

32. We remain hopeful that in its further consideration of our Strategy Advice the Government will recognise that the nation needs a greater investment in science, and that the necessary strategic reshaping of the science base cannot be achieved quickly enough without additional resources. Such additions will, in any event, be essential if the Government decides that the UK should remain a member of CERN.

33. Within the sums currently available for the Science Budget the Board has been constrained to recommend that the bulk of the previously unallocated monies be directed towards inescapable commitments. From the remainder we have given priority to a start on the establishment of university research centres, limited support of further Research Council restructuring, and modest developments in six areas to which we attach particular importance. It is an inadequate response to the many available proposals for worthwhile scientific developments from which the country would benefit; but it is all that can be afforded, and even these small initiatives will only be possible through the termination of existing scientific programmes.

34. Annexes A and B, following, tabulate the additions to previous planning allocations which we recommend and the revised allocations which result. We commend these to the Secretary of State.

SCIENCE BUDGET: RECOMMENDED ADDITIONS TO PREVIOUS PLANNING ALLOCATIONS FOR 1988-91

	1988-89	£ million 1989-90	1990-91
<u>AFRC</u>			
Extra cost of 1987-88 pay awards	3.7	3.8	3.8
Maintain level of university support	-	1.5	1.5
Transgenic animals	0.6	1.5	1.5
Move from Great Portland Street	[2.0]	[2.7]	[0.7]
<u>ESRC</u>			
Extra cost of 1987-88 pay awards	2.2	2.4	2.4
Move from Great Portland Street	[1.0]	[1.3]	[0.3]
Administrative Computer	-	0.2	-
<u>MRC</u>			
Extra cost of 1987-88 pay awards	6.4	6.4	6.4
International subscriptions	-	0.4	0.6
URC in toxicology	0.3	3.8	4.2
Research on AIDS	6.0	8.0	-
<u>NERC</u>			
Extra cost of 1987-88 pay awards	3.8	3.8	3.8
Restructuring arising from reduction in Govt. Dept. commissions	3.0	[2.0]	-
Keyworth II	0.8	2.2	-
Antarctica: new research ship	5.2	14.4	0.2
other	3.4	3.3	3.5
<u>SERC</u>			
Extra cost of 1987-88 pay awards	13.3	13.9	13.9
International subscriptions	-	6.1	4.1
Cray computer service	1.2	1.2	1.3
URCs (2 starts in 1988-89)	2.8	5.0	3.0
LINK	1.1	2.0	2.0
ESRF	1.0	2.0	2.5
Teaching company scheme	0.6	0.7	1.5
<u>Royal Society</u>			
Extra cost of 1987-88 pay awards	0.4	0.4	0.4
25 new University Research Fellowships	0.3	0.5	0.5
European Academy of Scientists	0.04	0.05	0.05
 CEST			
CCMST	0.08	0.08	0.08
	0.06	0.06	0.06

**SCIENCE BUDGET: RECOMMENDED ALLOCATIONS FOR 1988-89 AND PLANNING
FIGURES FOR 1989-90 AND 1990-91**

	£ million		
	<u>1988-89</u>	<u>1989-90</u>	<u>1990-91</u>
AFRC	58.4	60.8	60.1
ESRC	27.7	29.1	28.5
MRC	146.7	155.9	152.0
NERC ^{1,2}	90.9	96.4	82.2
SERC ³	366.3	366.1	369.8
Royal Society	7.9	8.4	8.6
Fellowship of Engineering	0.75	0.77	0.79
Science Policy Studies	0.1	0.1	0.1
CEST	0.08	0.08	0.08
Flexibility Margin	-	12.3	27.5
TOTAL	698.8	730.0	729.7

Notes

1. Includes £0.06m a year for CCMST
2. Includes transfer of £2.1m from 1989-90 to 1988-89 within earmarked addition for Antarctic research, which was agreed subsequent to the Secretary of State's announcement of the Science Budget totals and the Board's consideration of allocations.
3. Includes transfers from other Departments - related to ESA subscriptions - of £0.7m in 1988-89, £3.1m in 1989-90 and £1.1m in 1990-91, which were agreed subsequent to the Secretary of State's announcement of the Science Budget totals and the Board's consideration of allocations.

THE ADVISORY BOARD FOR THE RESEARCH COUNCILS was established by the Secretary of State for Education and Science in 1972 with the following terms of reference:-

- a. To advise the Secretary of State on his responsibilities for civil science with particular reference to the Research Council system, its articulation with the universities and departments, the support of postgraduate students and the proper balance between international and national scientific activity;
- b. To advise the Secretary of State on the allocation of the Science Budget amongst the Research Councils and other bodies, taking into account funds paid to them by customer departments and the purposes to which such funds are devoted;
- c. To promote close liaison between Councils and the users of their research.

MEMBERSHIP

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Professor R L Bell	- Director-General of ADAS, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
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4 February 1988

SCIENCE BUDGET ALLOCATIONS 1988-91

1. Thank you for your letter of 11 December with which you sent me the Board's advice on the allocation of the Science Budget for 1988-89 to 1990-91.
2. I am most grateful to you and your colleagues for the evident care and thoroughness with which you prepared your advice. May I ask you to convey to the Board and its secretariat my appreciation of their work.
3. I have noted the Board's disappointment at the outcome of last year's public expenditure survey. As I said in my Autumn Statement, the Government will be giving further consideration in the next few months to policies for the strategic reshaping of the science base. We shall take account of your Strategy Advice, and of the comments we have received on its recommendations. As I said when I met the Board, I hope that if together we are able to construct a coherent strategy, allied to continued care and economy in the use of existing resources, it will be possible to give greater priority to science in this year's PES discussions. But you will understand that as always such decisions are taken in a wider context and the conclusion is not foregone.
4. Nevertheless I am pleased to confirm your recommended allocations, as firm for 1988-89 and as a basis for Councils' plans in the years following. I would only add these comments on the particular matters to which you drew my attention. I have noted carefully what you say on each. The costs of CERN will naturally be considered in the course of this year's Survey. As to the location of the AFRC and ESRC headquarters, I find the Board's arguments cogent. These are matters in the first instance for each Council and I am confident that they will give due weight to the Board's advice. My officials are

in touch with the Councils on this matter, and in particular on the matter of costs. This may result in some small variation of your detailed figures, as the Board recognised might be necessary.

5. Finally I confirm that I shall be publishing the Board's advice in the normal way.



